The Book Factory

By EDWARD ANTHONY.

DEAR MR. MASON:

I've a volume bound in leather, wherein sleuths and villains glide, and I won't discuss the weather till I've laid the book aside; for a good, old fashioned story, with a hero's who's a scream, beats a conversation hoary, beats the weather as a theme. I will talk about the weather when I have no book to read, when the neighbors get together, swapping mental chicken feed. I'll discuss the southeast breezes which may bring a needed rain, and will list to all the wheezes touching corn and other grain. I will talk of oats and barley and grow eloquent on hay; oh, I'll stand around and parley of the goosebone by the day. But I have no use for spieling when I hold a story fine, in the shadow of my shieling, underneath my fig and vine. I don't understand the critter who can argue, talk and plead, who can stand around and twitter when there is a book to read. Neighbors come across the heather to my coop, at close of day, to discuss the windy weather in their rather windy way. If I have no book I chatter in a style to beat the band, but I bid them scoot and scatter if a novel is at hand.—*"Books and Talk." By Walt Mason.*

Walt, you are a lucky fellow; it is manifest that you haven't lately had a smell o' any novelistic goo. I'll concede that I have gotten some good narratives of late, but, alas, how many rotten ones my bookcase decorate. For "the younger generation," infants weaned a month ago, tell us now of each flirtation with Luella, Tess or Flo—tales of suff'ring adolescence, till I holler out in pain, "Damn the sloppy efflorescence of a silly scatterbrain!" What is more, Sahara fiction, started by that gem, "The Sheik" (where the torridest of diction thrills the ninny and the geek) is by carloads being written. I've received a ton myself, telling how an Arab smitten maiden wins the heart and pelf of a wealthy desert dweller—but need I continue, Walt? No, I've said enough, old feller, and I'm gonna call a halt. But before I do, friend Walter, I have simply got to say that, though it's a shame to alter the arrangement of your day, you'll stop reading in the heather when the books you get are junk and you'll start in talking weather (to which depth I've lately sunk).

Many students use the reference books in the Forty-second street library and perhaps it was a medical student, hazarding a trial operation, who removed the appendix from one of the big dictionaries in the main reading room.

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THE NAUGHTY ALGERNON.

Swinburne used at one time to terrorize cabmen with his stock of swear words in various tongues, according to a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine.—The World.*

The class in wheezing will now assemble. Children, what is the prescribed comment (see "Jesters' Handbook for Use by Entertainers" *and* Colyumnists) on the foregoing paragraph? . . . Right! "And his first name was Algernon!"

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Billy R. told us the other day that he thought it would be a good one on Bryan if the birthday of the eminent anti-Darwinian is an occurrence that takes place in the month of Ape-ril.

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"Don't start anything you can't finish" is an excellent motto, but if it were applied to the reading of books it would cause much needless suffering.

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Here is a paragraph from B. L. T.'s "The So-Called Human Race" (Knopf) that says more than many a book we have read:

> The fact that Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and other great departed whose names are taken in vain every day by small-bore politicians do not return and whack these persons over the heads with a tambourine is almost—as Anatole France remarked in an essay on Flaubert—is almost an argument against the immortality of the soul.

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"Don't read too much or you will get a headache," writes one of those newspaper syndicate medicos.

Headache? Dear, no! Tome-aine poisoning.

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REVIEWETTE.

As fine a book as I've lately seen
Is "The Life and Death of Harriett Frean."

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POEM SEIZED!

Irish Republican troops seize Limerick.—THE SUN.

It was probably very malicious,
A limerick utterly vicious,
Composed by a poet
Too stupid to know it
Is wrong to write poems seditious.

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THREE WORD PHILOSOPHIES.

"And that's that."
—Frank Swinnerton.

"What was was."
—Gertrude Atherton.

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"How to avoid embarrassing mistakes in English," reads an announcement of the Self-Correcting Language Method.

The safest way, our experience has been, is to shut up.

WE ARE PUZZLED.

After the hurricane of the late forties,
Peter Polite says, in the live oak trees
Were weird macabre macaws,
And ash colored cockatoos blown overseas
From Nassau and the West Indies.
These hopped about like dead men's thoughts
Amid the draggled Spanish moss,
Preening themselves, all at a loss;
Mewing faint caws,
And shrieking with nostalgia—
With dull screams like a child
Born with neuralgia.
And this seems true to me,
Fitting the landscape's drab grotesquery.
—"Macabre in Macaws," by Hervey Allen, in *Poetry.*

Macabre macaws must be worth watching,
Peter Polite needn't tell me so.
I'll take Hervey Allen's word.
When a poet says "Yes" I don't like to say "No."
Yes, sir, Macabre macaws, wherever they grow,
Doubtless deserve an audience.
But I wish Hervey A. would try
To be a more explicit guy.
I've never heard the screams of a child
Born with neuralgia.
Are they anything like the screams
Of a duckbilled platypus
Suffering from *exorthmalgia?*
Come on, enlighten me!
How does it sound, this noise
That "fits the landscape's drab grotesquery"?

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Ornithology is well represented on the list of books received by Viscount Lascelles and Princess Mary. In addition to "Birds One Should Know," "Wild Birds in Their Haunts" and "British Birds," one finds "Old London," which, we take it, contains many bird's eye views of the dear old burg.

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THE INFLUENCE OF DE LA MARE.

Don't sit in that chair. It's for pygmies.—From "The Fair Rewards," by Thomas Beer.

"Mark, it's after ten," said Olive (also in "The Fair Rewards"). "Go to bed."

This speech was made by Olive in the dark days of 1912 when people went to bed. In those days there were no flappers, yet Mr. Beer refers to one. If they had had flappers in 1912 Olive, we are certain, would have been one and she would have thought it ridiculous—as what flapper does not?—to tell any one to go to sleep so early.

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We are interested in Mr. Beer's spelling of the name of a certain well known dance that is popular with drummers and others. "Hoochy coochee" he calls it, and our dictionary being too prim to include the term, we have no authoritative support for our own version—"hootchy kootchy." We spelled it that way in a poem we sold to a magazine a long time ago and it went through uncorrected; but that doesn't necessarily mean we are right. The editor probably took it for granted that any one who would mention the "hoochy coochee," to return to Mr. Beer's spelling, would be sufficiently familiar with the subject to get the spelling correct.

Will some kind drummer please tell us how it is spelled?

(N. B.—Wheezes to the effect that it is not spelled but sneezed are barred.)

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Judging by the number of 'em we continue to see in the subway, "L" and street cars, "Buy a 'Sheik' a Week" is the new slogan of the book buying public.

England and H. G. Wells

By SIDNEY DARK.

H. G. WELLS has returned to London from the Washington conference, after lingering for a few weeks in the south of Europe and thus escaping from those eccentricities of English weather which have been the real foundation of the British Empire. He who can live in England in the first quarter of the year is evidently the predestined conqueror of softer races.

Wells's homecoming was entirely unadvertised. Years ago he protested to Henry James that to him literature was a means to an end. To him, publicity is also a means to an end. He does not love the limelight for the limelight's sake. He only takes the center of the stage when he has something definite to say, something that he is convinced that the world should hear and that the world should consider. When he does come out of the wings and when he does contrive that the limelight shall be square on him, then there can be no question that he is worth very careful attention, because the voice of Wells is always the voice of intelligent middle class England. Despite the fact that England is governed by a Welshman (it has nearly always been subject to men from the Celtic fringes) intelligent middle class England still counts for something in the welter of the modern world.

The queer thing about Wells is that although he is, as Anatole France has said, the greatest intellectual force in the English speaking world, although he is something of a superman, he is, as I have described him in my book, the "superman in the street." His voice is the voice of the sanest and in the long run the most influential section of the English people.

Take his book on Russia and the Bolshevists as an example. He went to Russia with an unbiased mind. For years he has been a collectivist. He certainly had no initial prejudice against the social and political experiments initiated by Lenine and Trotzky. He was absolutely unimpressed by the "circus" demonstrations arranged for him. He realized the immensity of the Russian experiment, he was depressed by the futility of much of the Bolshevist theory and most of the Bolshevist leaders, but he came to the same conclusion that the evolution of Bolshevism to some less "Johnny-head-in-air" political system must be brought about by the Russians themselves. Outside interference, either by the active hostility desired by Poincare Frenchmen and Tory Englishmen or the passive boycott advocated by Americans like Mr. Secretary Hughes, is mischievous and silly. This opinion is the opinion of the great majority of the English people. The proof that it is the opinion of the majority is that it is now the opinion of Mr. Lloyd George, for the genius of the British Prime Minister is that he never agrees with a minority for very long.

II.

The well advertised disagreement of H. G. Wells and the London *Daily Mail* over his letters from Washington may have deceived America in one important particular. Since the war the *Daily Mail* and the rest of the Northcliffe press have been more French than the French. I, myself, am French by descent. I have lived considerable periods in France. I can safely claim to a more intimate knowledge of the French people and the French character than is possessed by most Englishmen, and during the last three years the Northcliffe papers have over and over again suggested the inquiry to me, "What do they know of France who only Clemenceau, Poincare, and the *Echo de Paris* know?"

It would seem that the old motto "My country, right or wrong" has been changed to "The other fellow's country, right or wrong," and not even that but to "the particular rump that is governing the other fellow's country right or wrong." As all the world knows, in his Washington letters, H. G. Wells severely criticised the post-war policy of the French Government and the consequent attitude of the French delegates at the Washington conference. These criticisms led to his articles being abruptly banned by the *Daily Mail* and to their subsequent appearance in the *Daily Express*, a newspaper owned by a Canadian and edited by a talented journalist whose home town is Watertown, Wisconsin.

Despite the fact that it was to Americans that H. G. Wells owed his English audience, America may be assured that the England that works, somehow contrives to pay its 33 per cent. income tax, and sent its sons to win the war would plump for Wells as against Lord Northcliffe. Again I call the British Prime Minister as witness. He has been impelled to constant disagreement with French international policy by the force of public opinion. I am writing as a Francophil, though a Francophil with knowledge, and I can affirm that there is not Francophobia in my country. The experiences of the war gave to the English people a genuine admiration for the French and anything like hostility between the two peoples is unthinkable. But the average Englishman is far too critical of his own Government to believe that any other Government can be right all the time or even most of the time. The average Englishman, too, has learned to hate militarism. The price of peace may be heavy but England knows that it is far less than the price of war. When H. G. Wells hits, he hits hard. That is the habit of the man. But, though he may have hit unnecessarily hard, he was speaking for England in all he wrote at Washington.

That is H. G. Wells's immense importance. He is completely representative of his country, of his age, of his class. He was representative yesterday, he is representative to-day, and he will be representative to-morrow. No man was ever more successful in moving with the times. For a quarter of a century he has been ready with a series of acute diagnoses of his country's troubles, and with a series of acute remedies. When the trouble became so menacing that, for all his native audacity, he failed to find a promising cure he invented a god in his own image to help him to write the prescriptions. Here again he was typical of England and particularly of middle class England. It is characteristic of the Englishman to call on God when all else fails and never to call on him before. And this is really due to English courtesy and consideration, not to trouble the Almighty except when it is evident that none but He can be of any avail.

III.

Foolish persons have often accused Wells of inconsistency and frequent changes of opinion, of swallowing his own words with the gusto of a serpent swallowing a rabbit. As a matter of fact, I prove in my book that H. G. Wells is a consistent progressive. His opinions to-day are the logical consequences of his opinions of yesterday affected by the course of events. Americans have criticised H. G. Wells's alleged inconsistency far more than Englishmen because the English have recognized in his development of mind something that is natural and national. I understand that in America if you are born a Democrat you die a Democrat, and if you are born a Republican you die a Republican, and that it would be considered just as unnatural if not immoral for a Democrat to turn Republican as it would be for an ostrich to become an alligator. I may be (I probably am) ill informed but I am told that if all immigration were to cease the party in power in the United States to-day would be in power forever. We are not like that in England. We change our minds between every two elections. We change our minds about everything, and the value of H. G. Wells is that he realizes that these changes of mind are inevitable and that he helps us to change our minds for the better.

Apart from the writers of Ethel M. Dell fiction, whose readers no man can number, H. G. Wells is read in England more than any other contemporary writer, more than Arnold Bennett, more than John Galsworthy, more than Joseph Conrad, far more than any of the younger writers who nowadays regularly spend profitable winters in lecturing on culture and themselves to American audiences. Wells has a tremendous vogue in the public libraries and he is one of the few writers whom people discuss and whose point of view the English world is eager to know and to understand. This eagerness is not due to the fact that he is original or whimsical or selfish. It is due to the fact that ordinary workaday England realizes that here is a man who belongs to them, as Bunyan and Dickens belonged to them. I have never been able to understand how any one who is not an Englishman, not a common Englishman, with a common Englishman's love for common English fun, can possibly read Dickens. I have equally never been able to understand how a common Englishman can contrive to live without reading the Dickens novels through and through. Similarly it is to me a matter of astonishment that H. G. Wells, certainly a prophet not without honor in his own country, should be so widely read outside his own country, for the man's whole significance is entirely missed unless it is realized that he is absolutely and pugnaciously English. His cosmopolitan popularity is a tribute to the best that is England to-day. Empires come and go. The old boast that the sun never sets on the English flag may soon be no longer true, and it may be that no one (not even the ordinary Englishman) will be a penny the worse, particularly if the old boast should give way to the new boast, that the sun never sets on the Wells novels.

IV.

Middle class England loves "milling." It loves a fight with bare fists, and H. G. Wells was never more thoroughly English than when he said that Winston Churchill (ours, not yours) was "inattentive to any reality, untcachable by any experience," and then he went on to call the eminent English statesman "the running sore of waste in our Government" and to assert that "he has smeared his vision with human blood." That is the real England, not the kid glove Mayfair England, but the England of Leeds and the London suburbs. H. G. Wells prefers Charley Chaplin to Winston Churchill. So does England.

The trouble with England is that she hides Englishmen under a bushel and allows herself to be represented in foreign countries by distinguished persons who are often far less English than United States Senators from the middle West. At Washington this country was officially represented by that urbane, delightful Scotchman Sir Arthur Balfour, aided by that other able Scotchman Sir Auckland Geddes. The real English representatives at Washington were my friend Lord Riddell and H. G. Wells. At Genoa England is represented by a Scotch lawyer, a Welsh lawyer and one of those exclusive aristocrats who really belong to no country but the upper classes.

If it be a matter of importance that England should be heard and understood (and it may be), then H. G. Wells, the virile little man whose father was a professional cricketer (and cricket is a game that the Welsh and the Scotch understand as little as the Americans) and whose mother was the housekeeper in a great English house, who in his early days lived the life of the lower English middle class and who now with his splendid genius can reveal the mind of England to the world, is one of the most important and certainly one of the most interesting of living men.

As I have said, he has come back from America to the jolly country house in Essex, where he lives and works and plays hockey and other strange games which he invents for himself. His literary production has already been prodigious, and one wonders what will be the next direction in which his abounding intellectual activity will work itself out. It is certain that whatever his hand finds to do he will do it with all his might. It is certain, too, that he will remain to the end the spokesman of England. Indeed he could almost boast *"L'Angleterre, c'est moi.*